

# **System Configuration Team (SCT)**

## **Reasonable & Prudent Measure #26**

### **Meeting Notes**

**April 16, 1998**

#### **I. Greetings and Introductions.**

The April 16 meeting of the System Configuration Team was held at the National Marine Fisheries Service's offices in Portland, Oregon. The meeting was co-chaired by Bill Hevlin of NMFS and Jim Ruff of the Northwest Power Planning Council staff. The agenda and a list of attendees for the April 16 meeting are attached as Enclosures A and B.

The following is a distillation (not a verbatim transcript) of items discussed at the meeting, together with actions taken on those items. Please note that some enclosures referenced may be too lengthy to routinely include with the meeting notes; copies of all enclosures referred to in the minutes are available upon request from Kathy Ceballos of NMFS at 503/230-5420.

#### **II. FFDRWG and AFEP Updates.**

Mike Mason reported on the recent FFDRWG meeting at Lower Granite Dam. Most of the meeting was focused on the 1998 Lower Granite surface collector test, he said, but we also heard a presentation from Ted Bjornn on adult fish passage issues. We discussed transition pools, Mason said; Bjornn's feeling is that they are not a problem, and he doesn't see any need for structural changes, at least in the short term. We discussed fallout fences; Bjornn doesn't see the construction of fallout fences at Ice Harbor and Lower Monumental as a high priority. We discussed spill, and its effects on adult passage throughout the system, Mason continued; Bjornn's opinion is that the fish are doing well even during periods of high spill; fish are entering fishway entrances even when conditions appear turbulent, and are doing a good job of getting past the dams.

We also discussed the spill situation at Lower Granite; specifically, whether 35 Kcfs spill would adversely affect adult passage at that project, Mason continued. Bjornn said at the time, and confirmed later, after looking at the data, that 35 Kcfs spill should not be a problem. Adult

fallback is a problem throughout the system, said Mason; it seems to become less of a problem as fish ascend through the system. Bjornn observed that, if a fish falls back, its chances of getting upriver are basically cut in half. However, some fish fall back seven or eight times and still make it to the spawning areas.

Ron Boyce raised a concern about Bjornn's plan to radio-tag already-PIT-tagged adult spring chinook at Lower Granite and follow those fish up to the spawning grounds, saying that Oregon is concerned about the possibility that this study could have a detrimental effect on the comparative survival component of the ongoing PIT-tag survival research. Bjornn didn't contact anyone to discuss this planned research, said Boyce, and as we all know, the effects of radio tagging on survival could impact the validity of the other ongoing research. In the future, we need better coordination on this type of study, especially when it's piggy-backed onto someone else's research.

The other thing we talked about briefly at Lower Granite, said Mason, was the ladder exit modifications at McNary; it's a project that has been deferred every year, primarily because there are no real fish benefits associated with it – it's primarily a maintenance item. It was decided that we need to have a more detailed discussion of this project at the next FFDRWG meeting, he said, looking at all of the options and alternatives and making sure we have it scoped correctly.

John Ferguson distributed Enclosure C, a list of topics discussed and issues raised at the March 4 FFDRWG meeting. He noted that Portland District AFEP research updates are now available via the AFEP website at <http://www.nwp.usace.army.mil/pe/e/enhome.htm>. If you want research updates in between SCT meetings, Ferguson said, that's the place to look.

Ferguson spent a few minutes going through the list of pertinent issues – issues that do not require SCT resolution at this time, but that do need to be on the SCT's radar screen. The group spent a few minutes discussing the Bonneville Powerhouse 2 temporary PIT-tag detection facility; Ferguson explained that, while construction on the Bonneville 2 smolt monitoring facility is underway, the current PIT-tag detection facility at that project will be non-operational. In other words, unless we install another temporary detector, there will be a year -- 1999 -- in which we will have no PIT-tag detection capability at Bonneville 2, he said. That PIT-tag detection capability is critical to the upriver research efforts, so FFDRWG has been discussing various temporary facility options, schedule and cost. The bottom line is, without PIT-tag detection capability at Bonneville, we won't be able to do the third year of The Dalles survival study, said Ferguson. In order to get a temporary facility in place by the spring of 1999, we will need FY'98 funds -- probably \$1 million to \$3 million, he said.

The SCT spent a few minutes discussing the need for this project, given the fact that the CRFM program is already over budget in FY'98. Several participants expressed concern about the cost of this facility, in light of the fact that it will only be used for one year; Rainey said one option under consideration is to do this part of the permanent facility ahead of time, rather than installing a temporary facility that will then be removed. Ultimately, in response to a question, COE's Witt Anderson said it isn't necessary for the SCT to make a recommendation on this issue at today's meeting; however, given the short timeline involved, a decision is needed prior to the next scheduled SCT meeting. It was agreed to convene an SCT conference call to resolve this issue at 9 a.m. Friday, May 8.

Ferguson continued on through Enclosure C, touching on the completion of Bonneville 1 PSC construction and the upcoming surface collector test at that project, and on the status of the Bonneville 2 DSM/outfall construction. On the latter subject, Boyce expressed concern about the adult passage pattern at Bonneville – there are currently 10 times as many adults passing via Bonneville 1 as are passing via Bonneville 2, and the concern is that construction at B2 may be the main reason for this discrepancy in passage. This is going to be an issue, Boyce said, because there is a certain sample size needed for tagging at Bonneville 2 – probably 700 to 800 fish. If 90% of the fish are passing via Bonneville 1, it's going to be tough to capture that many fish at B2, even if we double the amount of time we're trapping daily. Ferguson said he will take this issue up with the task force and report back at the next SCT meeting; I'll also bring it up at tomorrow's Fish Passage O&M subcommittee conference call, he said. In response to a request from Hevlin, Ferguson said he will produce a brief written summary of his discussions with the task force and FPOM for distribution to the SCT.

Moving on, Ferguson reported on the status of B1 ESBS construction and FGE testing, on The Dalles sluiceway outfall and on B2 TIE removal, discussed at the last SCT meeting (please see Enclosure C for details). The next FFDRWG meeting has been set for Tuesday, June 2, Ferguson added.

### **III. Status of Proposal to Radio-Tag Adult Steelhead at Bonneville in 1998.**

Boyce distributed Enclosure D, a memo from Ted Bjornn describing Bjornn's proposed 1998 steelhead radio-tagging study at Bonneville Dam (a copy of the study proposal itself is also attached; please see Enclosure D for detailed explanation). The study, which could generate important information about steelhead straying in the Lower Columbia, would cost about \$180,000 in FY'98. We will be discussing this proposal at FPAC on Tuesday, said Boyce; to date, there is no FPAC agreement that the study should go forward. My suggestion is that, once the salmon managers have a chance to develop their recommendation on this study, if there is strong FPAC support, the SCT could then discuss the budgetary aspects of the study – in other words, said Boyce, I don't think we need detailed SCT discussion of this item today.

Hevlin expressed the concern that, even after looking over Bjornn's proposal, the study's objectives still aren't clear – I'm just not sure what this work is intended to tell us, he said, or what that information would be used for once we have it. After some minutes of further discussion, it was reiterated that Boyce will first seek an FPAC recommendation on the Bjornn study before asking the SCT to consider how it might be funded. I can tell you right now that it would have to be either Construction General or BPA-funded, said COE's Bob Willis – there are no more Corps O&M funds available. You'll also have to make the case that the problems being studied are hydrosystem-related, not hatchery-related, he said. We'll cross that bridge when we come to it, Boyce said. Boyce agreed to develop a better-defined set of objectives for this study; he said he would put these objectives in memo form and send it to Hevlin for distribution to the other SCT participants, prior to the SCT's May meeting.

### **IV. Preliminary Discussion of FY'99 Work Plans.**

Prior to today's meeting, the Corps distributed the package of FY'99 work plans; the group spent a few minutes discussing the most appropriate process and schedule for SCT review of these work plans. There was general agreement that it would be prudent to wait for the 1998 supplemental Biological Opinion to be finalized before completing the work plans review, because of the possibility that the 1998 BiOp will call for new measures and new information needs. Anderson asked that, in their work plans review, the SCT pay close attention to any areas of inconsistency with the supplemental BiOp.

Boyce complemented the Corps on the 1999 work plans package, saying that it is extremely useful to have the entire program, including all identified research, in one place. He also complemented the Corps on the completeness and lucidity of the individual research project descriptions themselves. Ruff and Hevlin seconded Boyce's remarks.

After some minutes of discussion, it was agreed that the SCT will provide their individual written comments on the 1999 work plans to Anderson by May 1, with the recognition that these plans are still evolving – they're not final yet, and there will be an opportunity to provide further comments in the future, said Hevlin. In the meantime, said Jim Ruff, we need to take a first cut at FY'99 CRFM program priorities. Anderson agreed to update the spreadsheet to reflect the current dollar amounts and cost estimates shown in the work plans, and distribute that to the SCT ASAP. On May 1, we'll have everyone's preliminary comments, and then there are a couple of other pieces of information we need to factor in, Ruff said – first, the ISAB report on John Day E-screens and Bonneville passage will be presented to the Council in mid-May; I'll provide an overview of the ISAB's recommendations at the SCT's May 21 meeting. Second, he said, we need to apply the criteria we've been working on to the FY'99 prioritization process. Hevlin said he will develop project prioritization work sheets, based on the SCT's prioritized and weighted criteria, for distribution at the Grand Coulee meeting.

## **V. Discussion of John Day E-Screens Implementation Approach.**

Anderson said the Corps has been having some internal discussions about technical and funding issues connected to extended-length screen installation at John Day Dam; at a meeting earlier this week, it was agreed to lay out a set of options, together with their associated risks and benefits, for SCT and FFDRWG consideration. Anderson distributed a table describing four options for John Day E-screen installation, articulating the advantages, disadvantages and estimated cost of each option; this table is attached as Enclosure F. The options themselves are summarized below; please see Enclosure F for detailed information on the advantages and disadvantages of each option.

- **Option 1:** Award by July 1, 1998; 21 screens delivered by April 1, 1998; 25 screens delivered by April 1, 2000. Complete maintenance pit by April 1999. Costs: FY'98: \$4.3 million. FY'99: \$22 million. FY'00: \$9.7 million.
- **Option 2:** Award by July 1, 1998; 15 +/- screens delivered by April 1, 1999; decision to proceed with second phase by September 1, 1999; 15 +/- more screens delivered by June 1, 2000; 16 more screens delivered prior to the 2001 passage season. Complete maintenance pit by April 1999. Costs: FY'98: ? FY'99: ? FY'00: ?
- **Option 3:** Award by July 1, 1998; 15 screens delivered and VBS work completed on 10

units (5 north side, 5 south side) by April 1, 1999; decision to proceed with second phase by September 1, 1999; 15 more screens delivered by June 1, 2000; 16 more screens delivered prior to the 2001 passage season. Complete maintenance pit by April 1999. Costs: FY'98: ? FY'99: ? FY'00: ?

- **Option 4:** Long-term test program. Scope is unknown. Delay maintenance pit contract award. Costs: Unknown.

Stuart Stanger of COE spent a few minutes going through each of these options. He summarized the differences between them as follows: Option 1 is the current plan, agreed to last November; under this option, all of the screens would be installed by April 2000; the Corps is on track to implement this option under the schedule laid out above. Under Options 2 and 3, all of the screens would be installed by 2001 – a year later. Option 4 is further study, with unknown cost or outcome. In response to a question, Stanger said Options 2 and 3 will probably be more expensive than Option 1, because the contracts will have to include an option – the contractor will only be guaranteed 15 screens, with an option to construct more. However, the FY'99 costs for Options 2 and 3 would be less than the \$22 million in FY'99 costs shown for Option 1, he added.

The problem with trying to come to resolution on this issue now, said Hevlin, is that the ISAB is about to release its report on John Day E-screens to the Council, and the Corps is understandably reluctant to award a \$20 million+ contract if the Council is later going to tell them to pull the plug on John Day E-screen installation. What's the risk that, based on our experience to date, the ISAB is going to raise a real show-stopper in its report? asked Boyce. I think the risk is real, said Anderson – at this point, we just don't know.

The SCT spent a few minutes discussing how to proceed with developing its recommendation on John Day E-screen implementation. Boyce observed that, despite the high costs associated with this item, there is no other project in the CRFM program with more potential to provide an immediate survival benefit. It sounds to me as though, based on this and previous SCT discussions on this issue, that the real question isn't whether we want to recommend installation of extended-length screens at John Day, said Hevlin – it's simply a matter of the pace at which we want that installation to proceed.

After a few minutes of further discussion, it was agreed that, following the presentation of the ISAB's report to the Council on May 19, the SCT will have an opportunity to discuss its final recommendations to the Corps on John Day the extended-length screen installation schedule at its May 21 meeting. It was further agreed that the Corps should ready a phased-approach screen construction contract, to be sent out for bid in late May, unless the ISAB report causes a fundamental shift in the region's attitude toward screens. No SCT objections were raised to this course of action; the SCT recommended that the contract be based on Option 2, above.

Is the SCT willing to commit a quarter of the FY'99 CRFM budget to John Day E-screen installation? Anderson asked. I think Ron said it, Hevlin replied – I don't know what else on the list would receive a higher priority, based on our criteria.

Ruff said he and Hevlin would touch base with Steve Pettit of IDFG (who did not attend today's meeting) and Boyce (who left before this item was resolved) to be sure they have no objection. Anderson said the Corps will produce a one-page summary of its preferred bid package for distribution to the TMT prior to the May 8 SCT conference call.

#### **VI. Report on Bonneville PH1 Surface Collector Study Plan and PH2 Ties.**

This item was covered during the FFDRWG update portion of today's agenda.

#### **VII. Next SCT Meeting Date and Agenda Items.**

The next meeting of the System Configuration Team was set for 10 a.m. Thursday, May 21 at Grand Coulee Dam. Hevlin summarized the planned agenda: on May 20, site visits have been organized to Rock Island, Rocky Reach and Wells Dams. The SCT will hold its May meeting at Grand Coulee on May 21, to be followed by a tour of the project; on May 22, a tour has been organized to Chief Joseph Dam. An SCT conference call, to discuss the Bonneville Dam PH2 temporary PIT-tag detector, was set for 9 a.m. Friday, May 8. Meeting notes prepared by Jeff Kuechle, BPA contractor.